

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Applicants respond herein to the Office Action of June 23, 2008.

Claims 1-20 are pending in the Application. All Claims were rejected in the Office Action. Applicants amend Claims 1-3, 6, 10 and 13-20 and respectfully request a reconsideration of the rejections. Claims 2-3, 6, 10 and 13-20 were amended for reasons of clarity only. Specification was amended to more clearly indicate that the transport element includes a single belt, as already shown in the drawings. No new matter has been added.

Claims 1-3, 5, 6, 11, 12, 15, 18-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Herronen (U.S. Patent No. 6,019,214). Claim 17 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Herronen in view of Cattani (U.S. Patent No. 4,562,919). Applicants respectfully disagree.

Claim 1, as amended, recites a transport device including a driven transport element 9 and basic carriers 11. See, Application, Fig. 1. The transport element has a single belt, and each basic carrier includes rollers 31, 33 securely mounting the basic carrier in a predetermined position on the single belt. See, Specification, page 17, lines 19-23, page 1, lines 17-18, and Fig. 2.

Herronen discloses a conveyor assembly which has an endless, continuously moving conveyor member 21 comprising an endless chain 22 and flat plates 24 secured to the chain. See, Herronen, col. 3, lines 27-28. Workpiece supports 31 are secured on the stationary frame 1 by rollers 34 which allow each workpiece support 31 to move along the stationary frame 1. See, Herronen, col. 3, lines 37-44. Additionally, each workpiece support 31 includes a roller 44 which is biased against one of the plates 24 to drive the support 31 with the conveyor member 21. See, Herronen, col. 4, lines 1-3. Accordingly, the workpiece support of Herronen is not securely mounted in a predetermined position on the conveyor member, as required by the amended Claim 1. Instead, the workpiece support is movably mounted on the immovable frame 1 and is driven by the conveyor member. Therefore, the limitation of Claim 1 requiring that each basic carrier includes “rollers securely mounting the basic carrier in a predetermined position on the single belt” is not disclosed or suggested by Herronen. Accordingly, Claim 1 is allowable over Herronen. Claims 2-20 depend from Claim 1. Therefore, Claims 2-20 are allowable over

Herronen, even in combination with other references, at least for the same reasons as Claim 1 and further on their own merits.

Claims 1-3, 10, 11, 15 and 16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Noestheden (U.S. Patent No. 5,465,826). Claims 4 and 7-9 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Noestheden in view of Vetter (U.S. Patent No. 5,377,815). Claims 13 and 14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Noestheden in view of Muranaka (U.S. Patent No. 5,901,949).

Noestheden discloses a conveyor system 10 for transporting workpieces 18. Conveyor system 10 includes a pair of chains 20 and 22 which carry pallets 40 supporting the workpieces. See, Noestheden, col. 3, lines 15-30. Thus, Noestheden does not disclose the transport element having a single belt, as required by the amended Claim 1. Further, each pallet 40 has two sets of rollers 54, 56 with each set securing only one end of the pallet to one of the chains. See, Noestheden, Fig. 4. Therefore, the limitation of Claim 1 requiring that the rollers securely mount “the basic carrier in a predetermined position on the single belt” is also not disclosed by Noestheden. As explained in the specification of the present Application, having a set of rollers securely mounting the carrier to the single belt allows the belt to be rotated 180 degrees around its axis (i.e., the transport direction), if necessary, to position the carriers vertically on the opposite side of the transport path. See, Specification, page 22, second paragraph. Such manipulation would not be possible in Noestheden because when chains 20 and 22 are simultaneously rotated 180 degrees around the transport direction, they cross, preventing any further movement of the pallets.

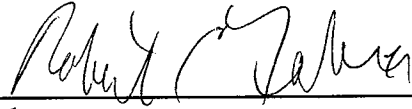
Accordingly, Claim 1 is allowable over Noestheden. Claims 2-20 depend from Claim 1. Therefore, Claims 2-20 are allowable over Noestheden, even in combination with other references, at least for the same reasons as Claim 1 and, further on their own merits.

Reconsideration of the rejections and allowance of Claims 1-20 is respectfully requested.

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